

Passage of Mansfield Amendment Could Cause Humiliating Pullout

By PAUL SCOTT

President Nixon's phased and orderly military withdrawal from Viet Nam could turn into a humiliating and disorderly pullout if Senate-House conferees go along with the Senate-passed Mansfield withdrawal amendment to the draft bill.

That's the hard-nosed interpretation that several conferees are giving to a private warning delivered to them by Defense Secretary Melvin Laird in a last-hour effort to try to shelve or drastically change the Mansfield proposal.

Approved by the Senate, 57 to 42, but rejected by the House, 219 to 176, the Mansfield amendment calls for a total U.S. military pullout from Viet Nam within nine months of final enactment of the draft bill, provided the prisoner of war issue is settled.

In discussing the Mansfield amendment with several of the conferees, Secretary Laird frankly reported that an orderly withdrawal of the remaining 244,000 American troops from Viet Nam would take at least 12 months.

The legislators were told that the President is proceeding with a withdrawal rate that is as rapid as the logistics of the situation will allow. To one conferee, Secretary Laird put it this way:

"Should the President decide this very day to withdraw all forces from Viet Nam, it would take him 12 months to get the job done. And this would be true even if the Defense Department used every sea and air transport available to it."

A faster rate of withdrawal, Laird stressed, would force the U.S. to shift naval transport ships and planes from the explosive Middle East and Europe and to employ American civilian flag ships of all sizes.

"If we are forced to withdraw all American forces in nine months, we

would have to leave a lot of good equipment behind," stated Laird.

Secretary Laird's belated warning comes at a time that congressional supporters of Mansfield's withdrawal amendment are so sure of victory that they already are preparing to shift the Viet Nam battle in Congress to another level.

Headed by Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield (D.-Mont.), the author of the withdrawal amendment, the anti-war group now plans to seek a cutoff or limit the amount of military aid that the U.S. can provide South Viet Nam to defend that nation.

This switch in strategy is indicated in the private statements of Mansfield, who seems to have lost all interest in blocking a Communist takeover of Indochina after his close friend, Prince Norodom Sihanouk of Cambodia, was ousted as head of state. Sihanouk is now living in Peking.

Sen. Mansfield, who also serves as chairman of the Foreign Relations Far East subcommittee, is privately letting other senators know that he is against the U.S. supporting a sustained military effort by South Viet Nam after we pull out.

While Mansfield is agreeable to the turning over of U.S. military equipment in South Viet Nam to the Saigon government, he is opposed to giving them any additional military help.

It is Mansfield's position that the U.S. has a moral obligation to help on reconstruction and rehabilitation, but that is predicated on an end of the conflict and would not apply to its continuance through Vietnamization of the war effort.

If the Mansfield position is adopted by Congress, it would thwart President Nixon's hope, through Vietnamization, of guaranteeing South Viet Nam a "reasonable chance" of survival against Soviet-Chinese Communist-supported North Vietnamese aggression.

The anti-Communist Saigon government estimates that a total of \$2.5 billion in military and economic aid will be needed yearly for at least three years to support the million-man army needed to defend that country after American troops are withdrawn.

American intelligence officials report that there has been no let-up in Soviet and Chinese Communist help for North Viet Nam. In recent months Russia has actually stepped up its military deliveries, while Hanoi has increased its preparations for new large-scale military operations this fall.

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Any congressional review of what went wrong in Viet Nam should carefully consider a memorandum from CIA Director John McCone to Secretary of State Dean Rusk, Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, and Presidential Assistant McGeorge Bundy.

Dated April 2, 1965, the document foretold of ineffective results that would come from the adoption of a "gradual military response" policy in Viet Nam which guided the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations' military operations there.

In discussions on changing the mission of American troops from one of advice and static defense to active combat in Viet Nam, McCone took the position that the enemy's base in North Viet Nam had to be destroyed for the new strategy to work.

Now part of the so-called "McNamara study" of the Viet Nam war, the McCone memorandum in part states:

"I feel that the decision is correct only if our air strikes against the North are sufficiently heavy and damaging really to hurt the North Vietnamese. The paper we examined yesterday does not anticipate the type of air operations against the North necessary to force the North Vietnamese to reappraise their policy. . . . It is my personal opinion that this program is not sufficiently severe to bring results.